Cross culture

Sociology, Communication

Introduction: IntroductionCommunicationis the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and/or organizations so that an understanding response results. Simply we can say, Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more person. The transmission of the sender's ideas to the receiver and the receiver's feedback or reaction to the sender constitute the communication cycle. SENDERRECEIVER InputOutput [pic] Feedback Brain drain Brain drain Brain drain Fig- 01: Communication Cycle

Cultureis an idea in the field of management which describes thepsychology, attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values (personal and cultural values) of an organization. Culture is a complex concept. In other words, culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves. Objective of the Report: The Primary Objective of this report is to analysis of cross cultural communication in IBM. The report has accumulated information to know about company's cross cultural communication, to find out its positive and productive communication in their organization and does the work effectively.

Methodology: Sources of data: • Secondary Data: All the data and information are collected from secondary sources. Cross-Cultural Communication: The success of a business depends on its ability to communicate. Communication serves as the medium for instruction, assessment, interpersonal relationships, group interactions and all other interaction that takes place in business. Withglobalization, business is no longer constrained within the boundaries of a single country. Large business organizations have corporate offices in different parts of the world.

They need to communicate in order to promote coordination. Also in multinational companies people from different parts of the world are employed. The way an individual communicates, is influenced by his or her culture. Hence in today's increasing global economy, it is important for managers and employees at all levels to understand, appreciate, and manage the impact of cross-cultural communication in the workplace. As our world grows, expands and becomes increasingly more interconnected by various technological advances, the need for effective communication among various cultures is increasing.

People from different backgrounds tend to perceive information differently. Hence, misinterpretation of information can lead to conflict. Cross cultural communication is of great importance through out the world. Though in our country, due to the lack ofcultural diversity, cross cultural communication is not treated with that much importance. But still with the advancement oftechnologywe have to interact with businesspeople in faraway countries and for this we need know about effective techniques of cross cultural communication Definition of Cross-Cultural Communication:

To understand cross cultural communication first we need to know what culture is. Culture refers to a group or community with which we share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world. Cross-cultural communication looks at how people, from differing cultural backgrounds, endeavor to communicate. It is more frequently referred to as Intercultural communication. (Ramsey, 1999). Culture refers to all the

knowledge and values shared by a society. The word culture is often considered in terms of nationality or one's country of origin.

Other more specific distinguishing characteristics of culture are region, orientation, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation and preference, age, marital and parental status. Another approach to understanding the concept of culture involves the beliefs, values and norms that exist to guide an individual's behaviors in solving common problems. Culture is the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior (Porter, 1991). Culture is the shared customs, beliefs, and social structures that make up a society, including languages, rules, myths, familypatterns, and political systems. (Boone et al. 1997). Cross cultural communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual processing tool with which people from different cultures create shared meanings (Berko et al. , 1997). When we speak to someone with whom we share little or no cultural bond, it is referred to as cross cultural communication. Our need to communicate across culture can be very beneficial personally and professionally. Within an intercultural setting, nonverbal and verbal communications are both prevalent in emphasizing the differences in cultures. The way we act and the things we say determine whether or not we belong in a certain culture.

Nonverbal communication systems provide information about the meaning associated with the use of space, time, touch and gestures. They help to define the boundaries between the members and nonmembers of a culture (Hofstede, 1991). Hence, Cross Cultural Communication is the

communication that takes place among people from different cultures. Cross cultural communication does not only mean face to face communication it includes all forms of written and oral communication. History of Cross-Cultural Communication: The need for Cross-Cultural communication was felt with the spread of global commerce.

It is very tough to get the specific date when cross-cultural communication started. Initial initiatives in cross-cultural communication were taken in different countries in different time period. One of the pioneers of the computer industry, IBM started cross cultural communication in 1953. It was introduced by the CEO of that time Thomas J. Watson Jnr. According to Thomas it was the policy of IBM to hire talented people regardless of race, color and background. During 1978-83, the Dutch cultural anthropologist Geert Hofstede conducted detailed interviews with hundreds of IBM employees in 53 countries.

Through standard statistical analysis of fairly large data sets, he was able to determine patterns of similarities and differences among the replies. In the year 1991, Geert Hofstede undertook the first global studies on how a specific business culture, at the time one of the most widely distributed companies, interacted with the local cultures of some 39 different countries. Another professional development initiative is IBM's Shade of blues – a more in-depth program for managers who are engaged in cross-cultural business interactions or have multicultural teams. Recent Research on Cross-Cultural Communication:

As people from different cultural groups take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultural values sometimes conflict. We can misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships. Oftentimes, we aren't aware that culture is acting upon us. Sometimes, we are not even aware that we have cultural values or assumptions that are different from others. One of the major barriers in business communication is cultural diversity. Many communication researchers are trying to find out new and effective ways to improve cross cultural communication.

In many cases patients face problems with both translation difficulties and not being able to see the type clearly. As a result they are sometimes unable to take their prescriptions correctly. Many of the pharmaceuticals around the world have been trying to solve this problem. Recently they have come up with a tool which can print instructions for taking medicine in 11 different languages on the prescription bottle labels. Patients no longer have to depend on translation from a friend or relative to make sure they are taking their prescriptions correctly.

The languages include English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, Polish, Russian or Portuguese. The tool is also equipped to print a 20- point type versus the typical smaller type, for those patients who prefer larger printed labels on the bottle labels to easily identify their medicines and how to take them. On July 6, 2005 Mark Nash, an American entrepreneur created a cross-cultural website created especially for non-resident Indians and offshore call center personnel (Nash, 2005). The website

www. intro2america. om was designed to provide information about American culture. It was also designed to provide information to call center personnel who speak with Americans on a daily basis as part of their job responsibilities. The site is designed to make the transition to American lifestyle easier and reduce the difficulties & misunderstandings upon first moving to the States. The site provides useful information, which is related specifically to cross-cultural types of issues. Moving from an Asian culture to a Western culture can be challenging.

The site was designed for the specific purpose of easing the transition to American way of life, for those who are moving to the United States (See Appendix for the sample of the website). To serve customers from diversified cultures, they have taken a great deal of effort and time to analyze what their customers around the globe want. To achieve this they are trying to understand their customer's behavior, cultural and spending patterns when they fly with Malaysia Airlines. The airliner has successfully catered to the demands of wide variety global customers around the world.

Application in the work place: IBM, the leading business organization in computer sector, has a huge diverse workforce from the very beginning. They have concentration to manage the cross cultural communication among these employees. Here we have selected IBM's Australia branch to present as an example of cross culturalenvironmentwhere employees are working together with their cultural differences. IBM has developed their cross-cultural program based on the legal requirements of Anti-DiscriminationAct & Racial Discrimination Act and corporate values.

IBM's policies on cultural diversity are based on years of corporate experience. It is a long-held view that by valuing diversity, it uncovers new perspectives, taps different knowledge and experience and generates innovative ideas, suggestions and methods. Three pillars that are in place to make up IBM's diversity strategy are: • Creating a work/life balance: Their strategy is to find the average working age of general Australians through statistical findings and fix age limit for average Australians. • Advancement of women: They think women should contribute more to the workplace.

So, they encourage participation of women. • Integration of people with a disability: IBM authority thinks that they have a socialresponsibilityfor physically and mentally disable people. The authority always tries to create some opportunity of employment for those people. IBM's most effective diversity programs combine ' push and pull' strategies. They have made good headway through company-led, top down practices such as formalized training or policies like floating cultural holidays. However, IBM's progress comes about through the contributions by individuals who are passionate about diversity issue.

Aside from IBM's diversity team within human resources, three other groups within IBM have formally identified roles in the implementation of the company's overall diversity strategy. These are IBM's Diversity Council, diversity contact officers and diversity champions. The Diversity Council The main objective of the IBM's Diversity Council, is to ensure that the contribution of employees from different background is properly encouraged and valued. Its key objectives are to enhance employee awareness, increase

management awareness, and encourage the effective use of IBM's diverse workforce.

This is achieved through personal commitment, regular communication, by gaining support for the program from other IBM managers and influencing decision making. Under the guidance of the Diversity Council, a series of cultural diversity employee roundtables have been held to gather more face-to-face feedback and ideas from staff. These meetings have generated many practical ideas for increasing awareness of cultural diversity within IBM. Professional development IBM has a professional development program.

The objective of this program is to ensure that the employees within the organization can identify and remove psychological barriers of diverse workforce and communicate effectively. The main focuses of this program are: • Understanding the cultural bias of each team member and their impact on mutualperceptions. • Determine the reasons why certain behaviors and communication styles fail in somecultures. • Identifying approaches to address cultural gaps that could lead to misunderstandings. • Handling issues about team decision-making, giving or receiving feedback and conflict resolution. Findings: IBM, One of the pioneers of the computer industry started cross cultural communication in 1953. • They think women should contribute more to the workplace. So, they encourage participation of women. • IBM authority thinks that they have a social responsibility for physically and mentally disable people. The authority always tries to create some opportunity of employment for thosepeople. Recommendations: Considering research and the case of IBM, we have some recommendation

here which will decrease discrimination and increase production by making the flow of cross-cultural communication fluent.

Those recommendations are as follows: ? IBM should compare their policy for cross cultural communication with others, so that they can get some new ideas to implement in their organization. It will help them to update existing policies as well. ? Not only the HR department of IBM, but also all other employees of the organization should be involved in the process of making cross cultural communication easier. It will help the whole organization to become a good team. ? Training and raising awareness can improve mentality of the employees towards others. They will learn torespectand honor others differences. Place people from different cultures as team leaders. If diverse employees get opportunity to work and share success they will be highly motivated. Discrimination will be dissolved from them and the communication process will work freely. ? A good idea can be to focus different segments one after another so that every segment can achieve expected mentality. This process will form unity and emotion among the employees of the organization. Discrimination will be terminated and the total organization will work as one body. ? Each program introduced in the organization should honor the basic values of the organization.

Every program should ensure that none of the employees are discriminated in terms of race, national origin or religion. Conclusion: From the above research we have seen that cultural communication plays a vital role for effective communication for companies around the globe. In our country due to the lack of cultural diversity we do not have to face the problems related

to intercultural communication. Many of the successful companies having corporate offices have been able to coordinate their activities through out the world through the successful implementation of cross cultural communication.

One of the fore runners in this sector is definitely IBM. IBM has independent division to come up with new policies and strategies to improve cross cultural communication in the workplace. Reference: Boone, L. E. , Kurtz, D. L. , & Block, Judy R. (1997). Contemporary Business Communication (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentince-Hall. 67. Ramsey, James (1999). Available: http://encyclopedia. localcolorart. com/encyclopedia/Cross-cultural_communication/ (July, 17 2005). Carbaugh, D, (1990). Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact. New York: Pergamon Press. 19. Berko, R. , Rosengeld, L. , & Samovar, L. (1997). Connecting: A Culture Sensitive Approach to Intercultural Communication. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace. 121. Porter, R. , and Samovar, L. (1991). Communication Between Cultures. Belmont: NTC Publishing Group. 273. Payne, C. (2001). Culture and Communication. Available: http://www2. mhc. ab. ca/users/cpayne/portfolio/cultcomm/default. htm (July, 29 2005). Appendix [pic] A sample website dedicated to understanding cross-cultural types of issues. [pic] ----------------------- Idea Letter, Fax, Phone call, E-mail etc. Idea